

## AGENCY STANDS BY OFFER OF LAND FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE EVICTED



■ Frank Tomlin – councillor says Pound Lane site is unsuitable for travellers *Picture: ANNA LUKALA BA35457\_09*

A GOVERNMENT agency has stood by its decision to offer all its land in Basildon as potential traveller sites.

Residents have been bombarding Basildon councillors with concerns after the Echo revealed last week travellers are preparing planning applications for sites at Pound Lane, Laindon and Gardiners Lane South, Basildon.

The sites are owned by the Homes and Communities Agency, a major landowner in the district. It used to be the Commission for New Towns which created Basildon.

The agency has also shed light on how the proposals came about, saying it is involved in a steering group looking for alternative sites for the families facing eviction from Basildon made up of Basildon Council, GO East,

the Equality & Human Rights Commission, Essex County Council and representatives of the traveller community.

In a statement released to the Echo the agency said: "As a significant landowner, the HCA has put forward to the council all land it owns in the district as potential alternative provision for the travellers at Hovefields and Dale Farm.

Discussions are still ongoing as to the suitability of any sites to take forward."

The agency said the council would be able to seek Government funding to develop any site on its land.

It added that it was involved because one of the agency's key aims was to enable people to have affordable homes where they want to live, including travellers.

# Travellers protest at 'bad quality housing' offered

By JON AUSTIN  
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TRAVELLERS are launching a series of protests over the quality of accommodation offered to them facing eviction.

Tomorrow residents of Dale Farm in Crays Hill will hold a demonstration in protest at new homes being offered to families facing eviction from the site.

The group will rally outside Southend County Court ahead of a test case in which Barbara Sheridan, sister of site spokesman Richard Sheridan, and husband and wife John and Mary Flynn, will argue the council has a duty to offer them an alternative traveller site instead of traditional housing.

The legal case came after being offered what travellers describe as "bad quality flats" after making it clear to the authority they cannot tolerate living in housing and want to stay in caravans or mobile homes.

Campaigner Grattan Puxon said:

- Test case in court over council offer of homes
- Hovefields woman fights to stay put in caravan

"The protests will also argue travellers are victims of the coalition cuts like anyone else. We understand the budgets for councils to create traveller sites have been dropped and the duty for councils to have designate land for sites has also been cut."

There are also expected to be protests outside two High Court cases involving the Hovefields traveller site, in Wickford, next week.

On Tuesday the council will apply for an injunction to outlaw any families returning to the seven recently demolished pitches.

Then on Thursday, September 24, Matilda Boswell, who is protected from eviction by a separate High Court injunction, will argue it would be wrong for her to be thrown off before a suitable alternative site has been found.

Campaigners for the travellers are

also sending complaints to Essex Police about the speed at which they moved on five traveller families evicted from Hovefields from a number of private areas of land in Basildon last week.

Mr Puxon added: "No attempt was made by Essex Police to ascertain the circumstances of those intended to be evicted."

"Among those forced to move at short notice were a pregnant mother, a boy with learning difficulties and a number of small children who had already undergone the trauma of seeing their homes bulldozed at Hovefields."

Among those forced to move were a pregnant mother, a boy with learning difficulties and a number of small children

## Thurrock to tackle illegal settlement if they move on to any council land

THURROCK Council says it is ready if travellers evicted from land in Basildon try to pitch camp in the borough.

The battle to clear unauthorised traveller sites in Hovefields Drive, Wickford, started last week when bailiffs from Constant and Co, hired

by Basildon Council, were called to clear seven illegal pitches.

The bulldozers were sent to clear the site last Tuesday.

A spokesman for Thurrock Council said: "Any new traveller communities who choose to set up unauthorised encampments in Thurrock are

breaking the law and we will not hesitate to remove them if on council-owned land.

"We will work closely with the police to ensure that this happens swiftly. If an encampment is made on privately-owned land, it is the responsibility of the landowner."

### STUART AGNEW MEP

Member of the EFD Group  
in the European Parliament  
Strasbourg –  
September 2010



#### NEITHER HERE NOR THERE

MEPs were threatened with a fine for failing to attend an 'important speech' being given by Barroso, President of the unelected European Commission. I noticed that Herman Van Rompuy (£287,000 p.a.), President of the European Council and Baroness Ashton (£328,000 p.a.), the High Representative, were both absent.



The speech was merely aspirational and suggested that the EU is the answer to all problems, provided it is given more power.

A recent Europe wide poll, commissioned by the EU, disclosed that over 50% were dissatisfied with the EU's involvement in their lives. Several MEPs suggested there should be more involvement!

Voting included approval to increase EU interference in British employment law. We voted against.



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